

What is claimed is:

1. A starter for an internal combustion engine comprising:

- an armature having an armature shaft;
- a motor case for accommodating said armature;
- a planetary gear speed reduction mechanism connected to said armature shaft at an end of said armature shaft;
- a frame, coupled with said motor case, for covering said planetary gear speed reduction mechanism; and
- a partition plate, disposed between said motor case and said frame, for forming a motor chamber and a speed reduction chamber;

wherein said partition plate has an armature-shaft hole and a chamber-connection passage between said armature shaft hole and said armature shaft for connecting said motor chamber and said speed reduction chamber, and

a circumferential groove is formed between said partition plate and said frame to connect said speed reduction chamber and the outside.

2. The starter as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a seal member, disposed between said frame and said partition plate, for preventing lubrication oil from leaking out from said speed reduction chamber.

3. The starter as claimed in claim 1, wherein

a plurality of projection projects into said circumferential groove to form a labyrinth.

4. The starter as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a through bolt for fastening said motor case to said frame, wherein

said circumferential groove opens outside at an outer vent disposed behind said through bolt.

5. The starter as claimed in claim 4, wherein said frame has a cylindrical wall and a flange having a female screw for said through bolt, and said outer vent is disposed behind said cylindrical wall.

6. The starter as claimed in claim 1, wherein said outer vent is opened by drilling.

7. The starter as claimed in claim 1, wherein said partition plate is integrated with said motor case.

8. The starter as claimed in claim 2, further comprising a water drainpipe connected to said circumferential groove and integrated with said seal member.